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Request for the inclusion of a supplementary item in the agenda of the seventieth session

Global awareness of the tragedies of irregular migrants in the Mediterranean basin with specific emphasis on Syrian asylum seekers

Letter dated 14 August 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to request, in accordance with rule 14 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, the inclusion of a supplementary item, entitled "Global awareness of the tragedies of irregular migrants in the Mediterranean basin with specific emphasis on Syrian asylum seekers", in the agenda of the seventieth session of the Assembly, to be considered in plenary meeting.

In accordance with rule 20 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, an explanatory memorandum is annexed to the present letter.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly.

(*Signed*) Y. Halit **Çevik**
Permanent Representative of Turkey
to the United Nations

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Annex

Explanatory memorandum

States bordering the Mediterranean basin are faced with increasing movements of migrants. Many of the irregular migrants are victims of migrant smuggling and human trafficking. Thousands of them are seeking to escape conflict. Hundreds have lost their lives during perilous journeys. Global awareness of the tragedies of irregular migrants and asylum seekers in the Mediterranean basin is therefore needed.

The dramatic situation in the Mediterranean basin is affecting countries in Europe, North Africa and the Middle East, West Africa and East and the Horn of Africa in different ways and requires a collective and comprehensive response based on principles of humanity, respect for human rights, access to asylum and protection, solidarity and burden-sharing.

Regionally, countries around the Mediterranean are source, transit and destination States. This very complex situation can be addressed only through a global approach based on partnerships among stakeholders.

Globally, the displacement of millions of people in the countries sharing the Mediterranean basin has aggravated the challenges faced by the international community beyond the immediate borders of the region. Dangerous journeys across the Mediterranean claim a significant number of lives. The movement of masses who have not had access to high-quality health care for years exposes the global health system to future risks. The disruption and lack of education for millions of displaced children deprive them of a future and make them potential targets for violent extremist groups.

At this point, Syrian asylum seekers deserve special attention. After more than four years of conflict and suffering, the Syrian crisis is the world's largest humanitarian tragedy. Almost half of the country's population, close to 12 million men, women and children, has been displaced. According to the latest United Nations figures, more than 4 million people have fled to neighbouring countries and North Africa. Projections by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees indicate a continued outpouring of refugees to neighbouring countries and beyond, with an uncertain timetable for their return.

The neighbours of Syria — Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq — and other countries in the region have been bearing the brunt of the crisis since its very beginning. It is neither possible nor just to expect those neighbours, or other countries in the region that host large numbers of displaced persons, asylum seekers and refugees, to face the migratory pressures and the risks and threats alone.

Unless the root causes of migratory flows, such as political, economic and social instability and conflicts, are addressed by the international community, this already-bleak situation is bound to deteriorate. The collective interest of humanity is in addressing the complex set of issues caused by the tragedies of irregular migrants and Syrian asylum seekers in the Mediterranean basin.

Such an effort will require the engagement of the international community for broader cooperation. Long-term commitment is necessary across a wide range of policy areas.

Consideration of this agenda item would enable the international community to discuss, within the United Nations, potential viable responses and solutions with regard to irregular migrants in the Mediterranean basin through pragmatic partnerships between countries of origin, destination and transit. Such a discussion is needed to address the immediate humanitarian needs of migrants and to foster regional stability.